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8 Catholic Studies in the Spirit of "Do Whatever He Tells You"

UNA M. CADEGAN

During a celebration of the University of Dayton's sesquicentennial in the year 2000, the singer-songwriter alumnus who headed the university's Center for Social Concern performed a song he had written for the occasion, "Do Whatever He Tells You." At the reception after the celebration, a colleague still fairly new to the university, personally nonreligious but with an evident affinity for the university's mission and commitments, commented that he thought the song was a little odd—hadn't something like "do whatever he tells you" been written over the gates of Soviet labor camps? My first response to the remark, phrased more wittily than I can recall here, was laughter, but I also felt the pull of the teachable moment.

The song's catchy, singable refrain ("Do whatever he tells you/Do whatever he says/Everything will work out fine/Jesus will turn water into wine/Do whatever he tells you") quotes Mary's words to Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:1–11), a scene long of importance to members of the Society of Mary (Marianist), the religious congregation that founded UD, because of its meaning for the society's founder, William Joseph Chaminade. Trying to maintain a light touch (we had, after all, reached the wine and hors d'oeuvres portion of the event, and a junior faculty member showing up on a Friday afternoon like a good citizen did not deserve to be rewarded with a sermon from a senior colleague), I noted the story's importance to the Marianists, and I also tried briefly to indicate the line's complexity in the story. Far from a simple, authoritarian directive, it represents a complex moment in which Mary, despite Jesus' somewhat curt rebuff to her hint that the wedding party had run out of wine ("My hour has not yet come"), nonetheless anticipates his intervention by alerting the servants to stand by for imminent instructions. Foreknowledge? Motherly nudging? Prefiguring of thwarted female ecclesial authority? The story's

more diffuse effort was required, one that sought to transform the way a significant proportion of the faculty went about their work and thought about it. A good Catholic Studies major can provide a solid degree program for a relatively small number of students, but a general-education curriculum informed by Catholic intellectual tradition and supported by a significant proportion of the faculty can affect the learning of every student who passes through the university. An effective office of mission and identity can enhance understanding of and participation in the mission for faculty, staff, and students, but mission and identity as a central aspect of the job description for every dean and vice president have the potential to transform the university as a workplace and as a university.

The advantages of this wide diffusion of knowledge and responsibility across much of the campus are in some ways also its disadvantages. Achieving it is an amorphous and long-term project, requiring time and sustained attention. Determining ownership and accountability becomes much more difficult when the responsibility is widely distributed. Instead of being the visible primary focus of a designated group on campus, it can become just one task in the portfolio of people with many other things to attend to. Then, instead of being an integral element of the academic and intellectual life of the university, it risks becoming one item among many in a boilerplate checklist, and everybody's goal becomes checking it off as fast and painlessly as possible.

When I lay the risks out this starkly, I wonder why we ever thought this approach was a good idea. One area in which it is possible to see a sustained cultivation of the benefits along with (so far) avoidance of the worst of the risk is in the university's general-education program, in place since the early 1980s, now likely in the midst of significant revision, but one of the most distinctive aspects of the Dayton curriculum, in large part because its requirements apply to students from all units of the university—business, education, and engineering as well as arts and sciences. Dayton is one of the largest universities in the country for which this is the case.

When the University of Dayton last revised its general-education curriculum in the 1980s, it put the humanities at the center of the first-year academic experience. Students were required to take introductory

courses in religious studies, philosophy, history and English composition, which were organized as a "Humanities Base" around the question, "What does it mean to be human?" and four corollary subthemes: faith and reason, individual and community, autonomy and responsibility, and humans and nature. The decision to make the humanities central was not uncontroversial, but it was justified and defended (crucially by key academic administrators, but also by faculty) as consistent with Catholic intellectual tradition. The central questions of the humanities, able to be framed in infinitely variable ways, but here in the four subthemes, offer avenues appropriate to a university into the issues at the heart of Catholic intellectual tradition. The integrative approach of the humanities, their sustained insistence that the great human questions are interrelated and that investigation of them must be synthetic and relational, reflect a key insight of Catholic intellectual tradition—the unity of truth (richly and complexly and contextually understood as that insight must be).

Making and sustaining this case has never been a straightforward task (it is an ongoing battle, for example, to keep the themes from being formulated as adversaries—say, faith versus reason in a cosmic grudge match), the difficulty of which illustrates one limitation of Dayton's diffuse approach. Diffusion can be hard to distinguish from dilution—if insufficient numbers of faculty and students know that the Humanities Base looks the way it does not coincidentally but precisely *because* the university understands itself as Catholic, then in precisely whose possession is this understanding? One possible way to sustain a credible answer to this question has been a historic strength of the Marianists and of the university—sheer persistence, or, more graciously, "staying at the table." The program was initiated with a two-week series of all-day faculty workshops, and has been sustained with semiannual workshops ever since. When they have been planned (as they have a remarkable percentage of the time) with an eye toward recharging the intellectual energy that keeps a program like this alive, these workshops have been one of the most effective means by which the program's focus has been maintained, developed, and deepened.

How these elements—diffusion and persistence—combine for some noticeable effect over time is apparent in two other examples. First is

what is likely to become the next iteration of the university's general-education program, at this writing still very much in process. The current process began when the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences appointed a working group charged with answering the question: What are the elements of a Marianist education? From one angle, this was an extremely familiar question, with extremely well-worn (if earnest and generally effective) answers. But the familiar elements, such as "collaboration" and "integration between liberal and professional education," all had to do with process. The working group's task was to attempt an answer to the much more vexed question of content, one that has been systematically avoided in discussions of general education nationally for well over a generation. The group was composed of faculty from the four units (fine arts, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences) of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as from each of the undergraduate professional schools (Business Administration, Education and Allied Professions, and Engineering). Chaired by an associate dean from the College, the group was assembled and charged in consultation with the provost.

The working group pursued its charge, through a widely consultative process, during the academic year 2005–2006, and submitted its report, entitled, "Habits of Inquiry and Reflection" in the spring of 2006.² The provost was impressed enough with the result that he requested a vote of the Academic Senate on adopting the report's principles as the basis for initiating a review of the university's "common academic program" (a term used to denote all a student's learning experiences, including those beyond the traditional curriculum). This vote was strenuously opposed by some faculty members, who saw the process as circumventing faculty control of the curriculum, but a majority of the Senate (which includes student and administrator members as well as faculty) voted to adopt the proposal, and appointed a subcommittee to do the even harder work of determining how the report's philosophical principles would be embodied in actual requirements and credits.

I present this long account of bureaucratic process in an essay ostensibly about ideas because it illustrates a number of these ideas most effectively. First, and forgive me if the point is obvious, but cultivating

a Catholic Studies ethos—that is, a climate in which a rich, interdisciplinary investigation of Catholic intellectual tradition flourishes in multiple forms in multiple venues throughout the university—is often very mundane work. It involves not just the crafting of stirring documents and inspiring speeches, but also early-morning meetings; counting of committee votes; endless circulation of drafts; patience in the face of disagreement, resentment, and misunderstanding. Faculty members commonly use "bureaucracy" as a term of abuse for things that get in the way of our real work. But if faculty governance is real, and incorporating Catholic intellectual tradition into the curriculum is possible, then the mechanics of meetings and minutes and seemingly endless consultation are no more dispensable to us than a carpenter's tools are to the finished piece of cabinetwork.

Second, staying at the table is not a short-term affair. Even very good curricular structures for integrating Catholic intellectual tradition with general education will not be sustained by inertia, tending once in general education will not be sustained by inertia, tending once in motion in the direction of ever greater and more meaningful integration. It needs constant tending and renewal of the source of energy, which is provided by a group of faculty interested in and in touch with each other about what excites the enthusiasm of faculty as faculty. Dayton's general-education revisions in the 1980s resulted in a somewhat uneasy but nonetheless fruitful partnership between explorers of the widened intellectual horizons that transformed Catholic higher education from the mid-1960s onward and inhabitants of the broad and deep Catholic intellectual and educational tradition that seemed in danger of being swamped. (Membership in these groups overlapped, of course.) Because the two groups stayed in conversation, however, they were able to attract and help develop an ever-widening circle of faculty committed to the idea that wide intellectual horizons and long and deep intellectual traditions were both essential to whatever a Catholic university was going to be in the third millennium. When the time came for renewed conversation about general education, then, concerns about the role of Catholic intellectual tradition were already a part of the mix, a part of the ongoing concerns of a significant number of faculty, not something that had to be introduced externally by academic administrators or mission officers.

One more curricular example will illustrate these ideas, and add an additional dimension to Dayton's approach to Catholic Studies. Interest persisted on the part of key administrators that the university establish a degree program (in this case, a minor) that would somehow participate in the "Catholic Studies" movement. They were, though, amenable to the idea that such a program should distinctively encompass what Dayton and the Marianists are about. So, in a surprise development, a committee was appointed. Again, its members came from all areas of the university, and took as its task two complicating factors. First, members agreed that the minor should be something students could come to relatively late in their university career—at the end of the sophomore or beginning of the junior year—since many of the students it would be looking to serve discover the Marianist "thing" only after having been at the university for a while. Second, the committee members placed an even higher priority on the minor being available to students in all majors, including the professional schools. Because Marianist education at all levels has always aimed to serve people from all sectors of society, students in business, education, and engineering, as well as the natural sciences, have often been the ones to become most dedicated to the idea of using their professional training in service to society. Making it possible for them to complete an interdisciplinary minor reflecting on Marianist education was integral not just to maximizing the potential constituency for the program, but also to its reason for existing in the first place. The result was a program in "Marianist Social Transformation," emphasizing the connections among Marianist history and charism as a response to changing times, Catholic social teaching as a response to industrialization, and a student's own intellectual and professional training as a response to the needs of the contemporary world.

The minor's requirements, therefore, needed both enough flexibility to adapt to a wide variety of major programs and enough coherence to give it shape and purpose. The details of the solution (a familiar mix of choices among component courses along with a planned capstone) are less relevant here than is the process and the outcome—both their advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include the presence of people in each professional school ready to serve as advocates and

resources for the program as it gets underway, because of their involvement on the committee and in consultations. Another advantage is the nature of the program itself—distinctively tailored to help students see just how, in specific times and places, Marianist heritage and commitments embody Catholic tradition. Disadvantages reflect additional drawbacks to the University of Dayton's "diffused" approach. It is relatively easy, at least within a small but well-defined intellectual community, to talk about developing a "Catholic Studies program" at Dayton. It is more difficult, sometimes to the point of self-defeat, to convey clearly what it means to establish a minor in "Marianist Social Transformation." This does not mean it is not worth doing, just that it carries an inescapable disadvantage that must be accounted for in thinking through how to help the program succeed. The task is worth taking up, because at stake is an understanding of what Marianist higher education has to contribute to contemporary Catholic intellectual life and culture.

In what sense can a university that has deliberately decided not to establish something called "Catholic Studies" offer its approach as a potential resource for thinking about what Catholic Studies might have to offer the Church as it passes on the faith to the next generation? In the area of curriculum, even the partial answer sketched here is at least threefold. First, the "Catholic Studies without Catholic Studies" approach can pay off in distinctive ways. An institutional decision to ask faculty from all academic areas to consider the role Catholic intellectual tradition plays in their teaching and research yields over time a multifaceted set of answers that in turn helps to reshape notions of what Catholic Studies can be. Collaborating with the student development division, as Dayton has done, adds an additional, crucial, dimension to the task.

Second, the balance between explicit and implicit efforts, between content and method, is a delicate one, but necessary. That is, the attempt to diffuse investigation of Catholic intellectual tradition throughout the curriculum can result in a kind of conceptual shapelessness. It is a sign of curricular health and institutional confidence to encourage all faculty members at a Catholic university to find ways in which their disciplines and their classroom approaches can enter into the overarching questions of what it means to be human. What can

but probably should not follow is that whatever results be considered sufficient as a curricular exploration of Catholic intellectual tradition. Some explicit study of Catholicism as a religious and intellectual tradition is necessary, though where and how and by whom it should be delivered are always going to be questions requiring diplomacy, persuasive skill, and scholarly patience and seriousness.

Which leads to my third and concluding point in this section: while the diffuse approach to Catholic studies can yield transformative benefits, this outcome is not automatic, and neither is the approach particularly efficient. There is a standing joke at Dayton that S.M. (Society of Mary) really stands for "still meeting." The downside of genuine commitment to collaboration and consultation is a slow, cumbersome, often amorphous process. The vision of widespread participation in incorporating Catholic intellectual tradition into the curriculum at all levels is a compelling one. The reality is that differences in interest and expertise will lead significant numbers of faculty to opt out, absent some compelling motivation or incentive. And compulsion is not the most edifying catalyst for curricular vigor. So is the vision anything other than an illusion? Potentially, yes, if faculty development is undertaken in sustained and appropriate ways. The good news is that this part is the most fun.

"What Are Those Meetings Where Everybody's Laughing?"

A colleague asked this question one summer afternoon, having passed the open departmental conference room door that morning and the day before. The meeting in question was a summer seminar in Catholic intellectual tradition, composed of faculty doing what we sometimes have to remind ourselves is what got us into the business in the first place—reading new and interesting work and discussing ideas together. Seminars have been a key means by which Dayton has sought to cultivate a group of faculty with an interest in Catholic intellectual tradition. The seminars have been of three types, all of which have played a significant role.

When the university initially began seeking to enhance Catholic intellectual tradition on campus after a major mission and identity report in the early 1990s, the greatest obstacle was the absence of a

community of faculty committed to research in Catholic areas. There were surely faculty doing such research, and committed to it personally, but few opportunities to develop the intellectual community that can give institutional life to such a project. Dayton therefore committed to fund a full-year faculty seminar, involving fifteen people from across the university, each of whom received a one-course reduction each semester. The seminar held biweekly three-hour meetings throughout the academic year. In the first semester the seminar did a kind of overview of Catholic intellectual tradition from thirty thousand feet, as an introduction and review for those with little or long-ago background in the area. In the second semester, the seminar focused on what work in Catholic intellectual tradition looked like in a variety of disciplines.

It is difficult to measure, but probably hard to overestimate, the extent to which this seminar helped to forge an intellectual community around topics in Catholic intellectual tradition. That is, it both helped create a community, and it designated that community primarily as intellectual. The university had sponsored a number of faculty seminars on other topics in the years preceding the CIT seminar; sponsoring one on Catholic intellectual tradition put it on the same footing, as a subject for scholarly study and investigation, and the experience of the seminar members during and after that academic year has borne out that realization. Seminars have played probably the single most important role in overcoming what may be the most intransigent obstacle to a lively intellectual identity as a Catholic university—the suspicion among many faculty members that promoting Catholic intellectual tradition is closer to propaganda and restriction on academic freedom than it is about free inquiry and scholarly seriousness. The best remedy for this suspicion is creating conditions under which faculty encounter work that is indisputably part of Catholic intellectual tradition and indisputably of high scholarly quality. It can be a freeing and energizing thing for faculty to encounter classic texts and examine them as scholars. Many academics may not have dealt with religious materials since before the beginning of their real academic training, and they may be pleasantly surprised to understand that studying history and tradition requires a scholarly sensibility but not an act of faith. The university also agreed to fund and support a second all-university seminar ten

years after the first, to make available to a new group of faculty the same opportunity.

A second type of faculty seminar has been equally important. Conducted by the University Professor of Faith and Culture (and, in one case, by the Ferree Professor of Social Justice), these seminars have been more topically focused, aimed at drawing faculty from specific disciplinary and professional areas into discussion of how Catholic intellectual tradition relates to their specific areas. These seminars have been conducted with faculty from the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, law, education, business, and engineering. (Each ran for one semester and offered a one-course reduction for participants. These seminars also offered funding for summer research, and required that participants propose and produce work related to the seminar topic.) Some faculty members used the opportunity for initial personal reflection on what was an entirely new area of scholarly study for them, some were launched into new research projects within their own fields, and some began cross-disciplinary collaborations with fellow participants. Perhaps the most distinctive by-product of these seminars was Dayton's 2005 conference on "The Role of Engineering at Catholic Universities."

For all their importance in creating and sustaining intellectual community around issues of Catholic intellectual tradition, the single greatest drawback of such seminars is their expense. While it is possible to make a strong case that the benefits are well worth the investment, in many cases the funds and the release time for such large-scale efforts are simply not available. But many of the benefits of the long-term seminars can be gained with much more modest funds, as our summer "meetings where everybody's laughing" indicate. During a number of summers (ad hoc as organizers were available), we have hosted shorter-term seminars for interested faculty. Some have offered modest stipends; some have not. Some involved a week of daily meetings, some biweekly or monthly meetings over the course of the summer. The most ambitious involved two weeks of two-hour meetings at the beginning of the summer, a six-week interim in which participants worked on and circulated drafts of writing projects, and a final week of daily meetings late in the summer to discuss the works in progress.

These more modest seminar efforts worked because of a combination of elements. First was combining wide invitation with some targeted recruitment. It is important to extend open invitations, in order

to identify people with an interest whom others might not know about. Intentional recruitment is also essential, for a variety of reasons—to aim for some balance among disciplines and career stages and among other kinds of diversity, as well as to involve colleagues whose work could benefit the group, or benefit from participation in it. The second key element is food and drink, appropriate to the time of day. It adds immeasurably to the sense of collegiality that makes these seminars successful. And third, the centerpiece of the effort has to be reading and discussing first-rate work in a variety of fields, clearly scholarly but accessible to a wide range of readers. Over time, as a given group of faculty develops a sense of itself, suggestions for possible reading will emerge with more frequency than the meetings can keep up with.

Catholic Studies, the University of Dayton, and the Marianists: Resources for Future Work

In asking what "Catholic Studies" might mean in the absence of an explicit degree program, I have looked at *what* Dayton sees itself to be about in this area; by looking at seminars and other avenues to faculty development through study and research into Catholic intellectual tradition, I have explored one crucial aspect of *how* it is we go about it. I would like in the final section of this essay to spend some time thinking about *why*, but in the specific and localized sense of *why now*, and *why here*? Why might this approach to Catholic Studies be particularly appropriate to the University of Dayton, at this particular time in the long history of Catholic intellectual tradition and the life of the Catholic university? My aim here is not to document the institutional deliberations that resulted in this approach, but to reflect on it in retrospect and make the case that it offers distinctive answers to the question of what role Catholic universities should play in the twenty-first century.

Two aspects of the University of Dayton's identity are particularly germane to its approach to Catholic Studies: it is a Marianist university, and it is a comprehensive university. Priests and brothers of the Society of Mary founded the university as St. Mary's School for Boys in 1850, but the word "Marianist" had then and has now a wider resonance. It applies not only to the members of the Society of Mary, but also to the

women's religious congregation, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (F.M.I.), and to members of the lay communities, sodalities, that were the first form of Christian community organized and led by Marianist founders Father William Joseph Chaminade, Adèle de Batz de Trenquellon, and Marie Thérèse de Lamorous. The fact that "Marianist" denoted a layperson before it denoted a priest, brother, or sister reflects a powerful ethos of lay collaboration that still animates Marianist enterprises, and it has had tangible effects on how the university has approached Catholic Studies and its wider commitment to renewing and enhancing Catholic intellectual tradition on campus. Members of the vowed religious congregations have certainly been crucial to Dayton's efforts as leaders and participants. There has been at every stage and every level, at the same time, a conscious and successful attempt to include laity as well as participants and leaders both. This is true at many Catholic colleges and universities, of course, but it has a particular resonance and self-consciousness at Dayton because of the Marianists' historical commitments.

Marianists have been dedicated to the education of all classes since their founding in France in the aftermath of the Revolution. This historical commitment, combined with the situation in which they found themselves upon locating in southwestern Ohio in the middle of the nineteenth century, led to a focus on practical education in the institutions that are the University of Dayton's historical precursors. The city of Dayton's centrality to so much of the technological innovation that shaped the twentieth century, especially aviation and the automobile (but not forgetting the cash register), helped reinforce this emphasis. Revisions of general education and renewed emphasis on Catholic intellectual tradition, initiatives undertaken in the 1980s, were consciously building on a legacy of commitment to technical and professional education. Despite the occasional tendency to disparage this legacy ("Jesus Tech"), on the whole faculty and administrators have confronted the issues of curricular renewal and faculty development by thinking through the ways that liberal and professional education can and must depend on each other, both for the sake of helping students develop highly proficient and marketable skills and for the sake of students' capacity to see themselves as participating in the transformation of society.

An underappreciated aspect of the Marianists' historical commitment to technical and professional education is that so many of the brothers were teachers and scholars of mathematics and the natural sciences. This was not only a powerful witness to generations of students about the consonance between study of all subjects and deep dedication to God—it also, I believe, helped to create a natural pool of interdisciplinary interest and expertise. Regardless of academic field, Marianist brothers, priests and sisters virtually all had some exposure to, and often deep expertise in, theology and church history, even if it was primarily through the liturgy and the celebration of the liturgical year. At the University of Dayton, therefore (and probably at many Catholic colleges and universities to an extent we have yet to consider fully), when the curricular discussions of the postconciliar decades took shape, they were rooted in this distinctive kind of interdisciplinarity. It was largely implicit, and to the extent that it became a subject of explicit consideration it could be and was vehemently contested, but it helped to hold together perspectives that might otherwise have retreated to their separate academic enclaves.

In addition to being a Marianist university, Dayton is also a comprehensive university; that is, it has a strong and central College of Arts and Sciences with Bachelor of Liberal Studies requirements that apply to all students earning degrees in the College, and it also has three undergraduate professional schools (Business Administration, Education and Allied Professions, and Engineering) and a School of Law.³ This composition from one angle seems like an obstacle to Catholic Studies, since so much of the curriculum, especially for undergraduates, is focused on professional preparation, and since the research focus of faculty in those areas will necessarily be in disciplines not historically associated with Catholic Studies as an interdisciplinary field. The university has made substantial efforts, and had some notable successes, however, in seeing the combination of liberal education, Catholic intellectual tradition and professional preparation as an opportunity to reimagine key elements of the purpose of a Catholic university. This enterprise is frustratingly complicated, exhaustingly long-term, and enormously rewarding. It involves attention to faculty hiring and orientation, but—perhaps more crucially—attention as well to faculty who become convinced of the consonance between their professional passions and the university's enterprise only after they have been

here for a while, sometimes a very long while. One concrete and innovative outcome was a 2005 conference on "The Role of Engineering at a Catholic University" (RECU), in which engineers and theologians reflected on how engineering as both a profession and an area of study and research can and should reflect the most fundamental commitments of Catholic higher education.

The RECU conference illustrates the potential scope of what we are attempting: not just safeguarding the faith of undergraduates while they acquire the tools of success, nor foregrounding ethics in professional training, but using Catholic intellectual tradition as a lens through which to view the academy's approach to knowledge and the professions' approach to practice. (The scrutiny is mutual and reciprocal, in case you were wondering.) Catholic higher education has to be about more than fitting (primarily) Catholic undergraduates for success within the status quo. Historically, this made sense as a mission, since the kind of success that allows for stability, security, and some measure of influence was largely unavailable to Catholic immigrants and children of immigrants. There are some institutions of Catholic higher education for which this mission of basic access to the American middle class is still at the heart of their reason for being. But for institutions that are now educating the children and grandchildren of college-educated parents, whose access and identity as members of the middle and upper classes have never been in question, (something more is required).

Required by what, or by whom? (By,) I would argue, (the nature of Catholic intellectual life and Catholic intellectual tradition, which themselves, of course, are grounded in the imperatives of the Gospel.) A university is not a church, of course, and for good reason. (And all people of good will can be compelled by a rich intellectual tradition and vision without espousing the faith that gives rise to it.) But a Catholic university needs to be animated by a vision of the good that results from ongoing communal reflection on the gospels, and it needs for all its most basic work to be at the very least consonant with that vision of the good.

High-flown rhetoric, perhaps a little sectarian in tone. What does this look like in practice? And what has it got to do with Catholic Studies? After a little more than twenty years working as a scholar,

teacher, occasional administrator, and pretty-near-constant mission-and-identity committee factotum, I am more rather than less convinced that the next era of the history of American Catholic higher education can be the most interesting and influential yet. "Can be" because nothing is certain, and historians get drummed out of the union if they predict the future. But there is what seems to me an unprecedented confluence between the wealth and status of many Catholic colleges and universities and the most pressing and urgent—and interesting—problems of the day. What I am *not* suggesting here is that we "follow the money" (though I think there may often be greater opportunities to do well by doing good than we allow ourselves to believe). What I am suggesting is that the method I described, (using Catholic intellectual tradition as a lens through which to view the academy's approach to knowledge and the professions' approach to practice, can lead to some of the richest, most innovative and inviting fields of investigation on the contemporary intellectual landscape, in the service of human flourishing.)

Examples abound, and proliferate exponentially upon consideration. For example, it is clear that without significant reform, the current system for health insurance and delivering health care in the United States is unsustainable. At the same time, the issue provokes something like despair from most commentators, because it is so complicated and because the path to change is so crowded with obstacles. Catholic universities could both serve the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the country and, most likely, benefit themselves if they were to identify and develop curricular and research strengths related to the multiple dimensions of this issue. (It could produce) (and surely is already producing) (important work at the intersection of biomedical ethics and social ethics, as theologians and philosophers recognize and explore the influence of political and economic power in limiting access to what almost all other developed nations recognize as a fundamental right. (Economics, management, and marketing departments could explore—both as emphases in faculty research interests and in innovative curricula—how a transition to universal access to health care) could be accomplished in ways that were the least economically disruptive, and they could help students think about a wide variety of alternative economic models that could serve the basic principles of Catholic social

thought more fully and successfully, while contributing to human flourishing at least as effectively as the current one. Political science and history departments could aid students in seeing clearly how systems function in complex societies, making transparent processes and forces that too often remain opaque and intimidating to the citizens whose lives they structure. (Public relations and graphic design courses could equip students with the skills necessary for effective communication and the commitment to use the skills in service of accurately and constructively shaping opinion on crucial decisions.) Engineering schools could achieve national prominence for a curriculum that not only taught budding engineers how to design and create innovative medical technology, but also helped them know enough about the world to want to influence how and where and by whom it is used when they enter the professional world.

Similarly dense intentional, interdisciplinary collaborations could cluster around a wide variety of other urgent issues. Dealing effectively and rapidly with the challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability requires the same wide spectrum of philosophical and theological clarity, scientific expertise, and political savvy if we have any hope of acting before it is too late. Taking up as intellectual communities (rather than relying solely on the appearance of particularly dedicated individuals) the obligation to help ameliorate the scandalously deepening global inequities in health and wealth, redefining profit to include imagining the possibility that the extension of capitalism to other parts of the world need not replicate its most destructive historical features (in human and environmental costs) could produce innovative and influential thinking in areas ranging from philosophy to finance. History, philosophy, theology, literature, political science, and engineering would all be needed to work effectively at imagining and daring to work toward a future without war, helping students to see clearly the militarization that has been one of the single most prominent features of post-World War II American culture, and the most urgent problem of nuclear proliferation. Constructing the institutions needed for a global civic society, so that multinational corporations and militaries are not the only institutions with real global reach, defining and working to ensure and extend human rights—as I said, the list of

intellectually rich, professionally fruitful, humanly urgent areas of inquiry proliferates exponentially.

I would like to emphasize that I am not advocating self-sacrificing altruism here. Not that there is anything wrong with doing so, but it cannot be a prescription for the future of Catholic Studies and the mission of Catholic colleges and universities. Individuals can commit themselves to total self-giving; institutions cannot. In imagining how Catholic Studies, broadly conceived, can serve as a resource for the Church and for the world, we can retain a constructive pragmatism about an institution's need to protect and perpetuate itself, precisely so that it can, to the extent possible, create the conditions under which all of these other things can take place. Universities have more experience doing this than almost any other societal institution in the modern world.

A number of years ago I played a small role in an interdisciplinary research project that sought to apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to the delivery of adolescent health care. The project involved sociologists, theologians, a specialist in medical communication, physicians, nurses, psychologists, and ethicists.⁴ The most lasting insight for me personally was realizing that probably three-quarters of all the reforms suggested by reflection on Catholic social teaching would save considerable amounts of money. I wondered when it was all over if what we really should be about at Catholic universities is training lobbyists—only a half-facetious suggestion, since what seemed clear to me about the results of the adolescent health project was that changing people's minds about certain basic political decisions was key to actually implementing all the things that were the right thing to do in multiple senses of the term. Selfless giving in service of the poor is a powerful prophetic witness to which we are probably called in more ways than we know how to listen for. But there is ample room to work for justice between where most Catholic universities are and where the point of real sacrifice might be reached.

Clearly, there are many, many people who are not Catholic and not employed by Catholic universities committed to and actively working on all of these issues. You do not need to be Catholic to be concerned about the future of the planet. But there is a powerful argument to be made that Catholic intellectual tradition offers distinctive, perhaps

unmatched, resources for helping us to reimagine intellectual life in ways that can serve these needs more fully. The configuration of the academy looks different today than it did a century ago and it will look different a century from now. We cannot know for sure the exact content of that difference but since it results at least in part from human choices, we may as well try to shape it in accord with our deepest and truest commitments. The expertise of all fields is necessary and interdependent: collaboration between philosophy and natural science, good use of the tools of social science, cultivation of the imagination of students through the humanities—these and other relevant tasks are ideally suited to the integrative vision of Catholic intellectual tradition.

Exhortation by itself does not remove real and persistent obstacles. Interdisciplinary work is and will remain difficult. In particular, sorting out how disciplines other than theology form part of Catholic intellectual tradition is both an interesting intellectual problem and a potential source of neuralgia. To the extent that Catholic Studies as a movement has been motivated by a perceived need to reconnect young people with the traditions of Catholicism, examining its dark side and the dishonorable aspects of its history as an institution raises hackles. Those inclined to debunking and those inclined to defending often have little to do with each other. Instead of working at cross-purposes, however, these two groups might instead explore the possibility that they are both essential. Most immediately, for example, one of the huge hurdles to making any kind of case for Catholic Studies as a resource for addressing urgent contemporary needs is the drastic loss of credibility brought about by the clergy sexual abuse crisis. One suspects that a public proposal offering these resources would be met with a polite “no, thank you,” from many of our secular peers (that is, those whose rejection did not consist of “hell, no”). Clarity and honesty about what gave rise to the crisis will take enormous amounts of scholarly energy for at least the next generation. And that is the best-case scenario—absent such honest dealing, the loss of credibility could well be (justifiably) permanent. And all of these obstacles could be terminally daunting well before we even contemplate the inevitable difficulty of swimming against the cultural tide, and against the interests of corrosive understandings of money and power that have had the dominant cultural voice for a very long while.

Which brings us back to the wedding feast at Cana. I used it at the beginning to illustrate the complexity of the culture and intellectual tradition into which Catholic universities invite secular colleagues and colleagues from other religious traditions, along with the delicacy and extent of the acculturation required, should colleagues accept the invitation. But it has also served for me as a symbol of a certain kind of hope. For vowed Marianists, the touchstone for interpreting the story is a letter written by founder William Joseph Chaminade in 1839 instructing priests preparing to preach annual retreats, and celebrating the recently received papal approval of the Society of Mary's constitution. The letter closes by saying, "Ours is a great work, a magnificent work. If it is universal, it is because we are Missionaries of Mary, who has said to us, 'Do whatever he tells you.'"⁵ That sense of being sent is vital to the Marianist charism. As a layperson and a faculty member, I hear in the story a number of things that can sustain, perhaps beyond what current circumstances give us reason to expect, a commitment to the potential of Catholic Studies.

Mary's "Do whatever he tells you" places us sometimes in the role of the stewards. What did they think upon receiving this command? Did they think filling the huge wine jars with water—no small physical task—was pointless? Did they complain about being forced to do useless work while there was a wedding celebration going on? Did they laugh at Mary behind her back for giving such an irrational order? If the jars had remained full only of water, they could have complained and jeered justifiably at the embarrassment. But, regardless of what they thought, we know what they did: They filled the jars. We do not have to be entirely confident of the outcome to do our best to hear and respond to the needs around us in ways that we are best suited to. We might feel silly and perhaps resentful laboring away at something that could well be embarrassingly ineffective. But it is also possible that our cooperation, our response, helps to create the conditions for the most unlikely of gifts.

What this story indicates about the relationship between Jesus and Mary also offers material for reflection. Mary is attentive to the needs of the celebration in which she is participating, and confidently assertive both in her approach to Jesus ("They have no more wine") and in her command to the servants, apparently in contradiction to Jesus'

answer. It would be easy and dangerous to take this analogy too far, but in attentively discerning the needs of the contemporary world, asking for help to accomplish what is beyond our own capacity, but then taking bold steps to prepare to receive that help even despite its apparent refusal, we would be acting in imitation of the relationship between Jesus and Mary, another absolutely vital Marianist stance. That Mary seems to recognize something about Jesus' "hour" even before he was ready to commit to it publicly suggests that discernment is a deeply communal and relational process in which human and divine collaboration brings about new things in the world.

Finally, one of the most important things about the story is that it takes place at a wedding celebration. Jesus' first miracle is not to heal someone suffering hopelessly or to give food to the poor and hungry, but to ensure the provision of appropriate hospitality in the service of great celebration. It is easy to survey the landscape of the contemporary world, conclude that it is difficult and expensive enough simply to educate competent professionals, and take our primary cues from professional associations and the front pages of the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. But if our cues come fundamentally from the gospel, we find there a God who understands that it matters whether wedding guests have wine. A wedding: there is no more ordinary nor more magical sign of hope and assent to the future. Celebration, real festivity, as philosopher Josef Pieper so often made clear, depends on an idea of time in which the Incarnation is always real and always present. Catholic intellectual life as a response to the need for deeper, more genuine, more extended celebration—that is a mission into which I suspect Catholic higher education can invite partners fruitfully for many years to come.